My Education At Piney Woods School

by DORIS JAMES

(Price $1.00)

MY EDUCATION AT PINEY WOODS SCHOOL

By DORIS JAMES

Miss James, a white assistant at the famous Piney Woods School, tells of the great educational work for colored boys and girls being done among the tall pines.

Here are observations, impressions, and appraisals by one who for eighteen years has been on the office staff of this industrial school for Negroes.

Miss James also acquired first-hand knowledge of the needs of the Negroes in Mississippi and elsewhere, and of their possibilities if given opportunities for education.

All who read this appreciative recital of accomplishments, under severe difficulties, will surely share the writer's enthusiasm and will be captivated by Miss James' remarkable recital of what is being done at the Piney Woods School.

left by Julia Backus

Property of Congregational Church,
Groton

MY EDUCATION
AT
PINEY WOODS SCHOOL

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013

http://archive.org/details/myeducationatpin00dori

MR. AND MRS. LAURENCE C. JONES.
TURNER HARRIS AND LAURENCE, JR., 1920.

My Education
at
Piney Woods School

By
DORIS JAMES

New York
Fleming H. Revell Company
London and Edinburgh

Copyright, MCMXXXVII, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

All rights reserved: no part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the Publisher, except by a reviewer desiring to quote brief passages for inclusion in a notice to be inserted in a newspaper or periodical.

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
London: 21 Paternoster Square

To those who suffered from and sympathized
with my mistakes while I was learning
these lessons I gladly dedicate
this little volume.

INFORMATION

FOR the benefit of those into whose hands this little book comes, who are not already familiar with Piney Woods School, we wish to state that it is a work-your-way industrial school for Negro boys and girls. It is located twenty-two miles southeast of Jackson, Mississippi, in the lower end of Rankin County. U. S. Highway number 49 runs through the school's land; also the Illinois Central Railroad, with a stop called Piney Woods.

This institution has grown steadily since its inception under a cedar tree in 1910. Laurence C. Jones, its founder, is still its chief guiding spirit. The plant is valued at $215,000. Its courses cover the grades and high school, two years of teacher training study, and nursery school work. The faculty numbers thirty-six, most of whom are industrial instructors. The average student body is three hundred and fifty.

Piney Woods School has a small endowment

fund, but most of its income is from private solicitation and through groups of singers sent out to travel for the school. It is a corporation and the property is vested in a board of trustees. This board is made up of Northerners and Southerners, both white and Negro.

A large farm, dairy, vegetable garden, and poultry yard are as much a part of the institution as are the classrooms. These enable boys to work in return for their schooling. The buildings have been erected by them, even to the making of the brick. Much of the furniture is the work of students. Increased skill of the hands for the normal tasks of life is a part of the educational policy. A printing plant, broom-making, shoemending, blacksmithing and auto repair shops, offer specialization to those who wish to perfect themselves in these trades. The girls work in the sewing department, the cannery, the laundry; and weave rugs. Band, orchestra and vocal music are taught by trained instructors, since it is recognized that many members of the Negro race will find their life's work in these avenues. All the cooking is done by students.

In religion Piney Woods School is undenomi-

national, but Christian. No effort is made to win students from former church affiliations. Representatives from many bodies speak in our chapel, and all are welcomed.

The Piney Woods Country Life School (corporate name) owns fifteen hundred acres of land. There are six large brick buildings and many smaller frame ones. Two-thirds of the students and all the faculty members live on the premises.

Laurence C. Jones, the founder and principal of the school, is a graduate of the State University of Iowa. He is assisted by a corps of well trained workers, the head of which is Miss Ella J. Carter, a graduate of Piney Woods in its first class, and later of the Iowa State Teachers College.

For further information write either the school or the references given below:

John H. Kraft, Vice-President,
Kraft-Phenix Cheese Corporation,
Chicago, Ill.

Rev. G. A. Schmidt,
1028 Port Street,
New Orleans, La.

Miss Mabel Carney,
Director Rural Education,
Teachers College, Columbia University,
New York, N. Y.

James R. Leavell, President,
Illinois Continental Bank & Trust Co.,
Chicago, Ill.

Mr. Lamont Rowlands,
Lumberman,
Picayune, Mississippi.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN Piney Woods School had been in existence ten years, there came to us from Des Moines, Iowa (although a native of Denver, Colorado), a young white woman in the person of Miss Doris James.

Miss James' business experience fitted her to meet the needs in the office of our institution, and it was with pleasure that we welcomed her among us.

The record on the following pages is her own impression of Piney Woods and its people, as well as of race and human conditions. Whatever her sentiments on these subjects, they are her own, gleaned from first-hand contact with our students, our faculty, and our people in their churches of the communities around the school, as well as from her contact with our race elsewhere.

Miss James' mind has always been busy observing the part the Negro is playing in America, even though her hands were full of the

tasks she happily carried on at Piney Woods, or for us away from the school. While her message is primarily one from herself to the friends who are interested in the building up of our institution, I can commend it to all who are concerned, as is she, with the larger aspects of social life in America.

The manuscript of this book has been waiting for two years because Piney Woods has not had the funds with which to publish it. Miss Beulah Pack has now made possible the initial payment and with gratitude I wish here to acknowledge it.

LAURENCE C. JONES,
Founder and Principal,
The Piney Woods Country Life School,
Piney Woods, Mississippi.

PREFACE

DURING the years in which I have been at Piney Woods many people have inquired where I received my education. I have always jestingly told them at Piney Woods School, for I feel that what was received elsewhere amounts to little in comparison.

The following account makes no attempt at being consecutive. I have simply tried to set down some of my impressions and thoughts regarding the school, its workers, and what it is accomplishing.

I feel I have had a rare privilege here, aside from any service I have been able to render. To know intimately such people as these with whom I have been associated during the years, is to have tasted life's honey and to have felt its satisfactions.

Let other members of the white race, who feel they have little to gain from coming to know intimately those of Negro origin, receive my testimony and realize that not only is a

new world opened up to them, but that it is a world full of beautiful characters, of sturdy souls, and of challenge which will bring out the best in oneself.

D. J.

Piney Woods School,
Piney Woods, Miss.

CONTENTS

I

Matriculation 19

II

My Text-books 31

III

Some Lessons Learned 45

IV

Sources of Supply 51

V

Another Grade 54

VI

What About Graduation? 60

VII

More Lessons Learned 74

ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

Mr. and Mrs. Laurence C. Jones, Turner Harris and Laurence, Jr., 1920 ..... Title

School Girls Preparing Corn for Canning. 26

Chapel, Offices and School Rooms with Community House in Foreground, 1937 56

Boys Erecting Their Own Dormitory ... 66

I

MATRICULATION

MY first weeks at Piney Woods School were so filled with impressions and reactions that I think it was at least a month before I had any ideas of my own.

The whole situation was new to me. I had come from a Northern city, and the great stretches of timber, the red clay hills, the cabin homes and the balmy atmosphere all seemed a part of the new world. But to say that I felt ill at ease or in any way strange, because the people among whom I had come to live were Negroes, would be beside the truth. I did not feel one bit differently.

I came in 1920—the last year in which Piney Woods School used the old whitewashed, frame building for its combination chapel, classrooms, office, and teachers' dormitory. It was a hectic year. At Christmas time the boys' dormitory burned and the teachers doubled up in order to share space with some

of the refugees. Other boys lived in tents until better quarters could be built. Mrs. Green, the elderly lady who came when I did, and myself were the only white workers, and were given residence in the already crowded Jones' home, making nine to live in a five-roomed house.

Perhaps the very necessity for sharing each other's lives at every waking moment drew us closer together—I do not know; but I do realize that after the first few weeks I began to understand the folks at Piney Woods, and they me, in a way which has been a precious heritage ever since. I think I have never seen them in the perspective with which I viewed the surroundings; I was already too much one of them.

The urgent necessity for funds with which to rush to completion a dormitory for the girls, the foundation for which had been laid some years before, became the ruling passion of us all that year. Together we planned out ways of putting our needs on paper so that people up North might visualize them and desire to help.

We worked the long hours of the day and

far into the night to get the letters out. We had only kerosene lamps by which to see, but no one thought of complaining and some way our eyes did not fail.

The school I found here at Piney Woods was, in the words of the proverb, "fearful and wonderful." Nearly two hundred boarding students were crowded into quarters so small that professional educators would have rebelled; not so Mr. and Mrs. Jones—the school's founder and his wife. They knew that a cramped chance for an education is better than no chance at all; so while I warned that if they squeezed any more into the classrooms or dormitories they would be in danger of developing square corners on the students, they still persisted. The teachers were so overworked that they almost fell asleep at night school, after having also taught all day, but the classes were there to be taught, and they taught them. One instructor told me she had had her eleventh session that day and there were more to follow.

It would be hard to describe the two extremes and the clearness with which they stood out that first year. The urge for offer-

ing an opportunity to needy boys and girls so possessed Mr. and Mrs. Jones that the rest of us felt it almost beyond reason, yet every one worked with a will that was also beyond reason. The quarters were rough. The food for us all was none too good, but it was the best to be had, so no one complained.

To make this a true record I must honestly state that while I was glad to share their fare, it did nearly kill me before Mr. and Mrs. Jones realized the situation and came to the rescue. Rice as a vegetable had never before entered my diet. I thought only the folks in China ate rice like that, so was totally unprepared to have it served three times a day as the main article of food. It was made palatable by brown gravy, which in reality was nothing but browned flour and water, for it had not one bit of meat or fat foundation. Then there were the eternal greens; spinach I had eaten before, but certainly not every day, and the mustard and collards, cabbage leaves and turnip tops, and sundry other varieties which found their way to the table constantly, seemed like enemies instead of the

friends I have since found them to be. For do they not furnish the necessary variety to offset so much rice?

I draw a kindly curtain of forgetfulness over the rest of the menu of that season, but suffice it to say that butter, eggs, coffee, sugar and dessert were so rare as to be Sunday food only, and sometimes not then. And corn bread was bread, I learned, in the South. For sweetening we used homemade syrup; fats we practically did without.

Then there was the weather. I thought I had come South to a mild, temperate, sunny climate. It was so all fall, except that it was warmer than I really desired, but December began to change things. It rained and rained. Then it turned cold, and I can honestly testify that it was the coldest cold I had ever felt, in spite of the fact that water hardly froze out of doors. It chilled your very bones. The houses were set up on blocks to keep the dampness from rotting the sills, so the cold struck from all directions. The only heat was from fireplaces, and I say readily that the man who invented a fireplace as a means of heat had a feeble mind. In other

words, we shivered all winter long; the floors became so cold that it was necessary to wear rubbers in the house to keep the feet from suffering.

Unpleasant as were many of these circumstances, they hardly made an impression. All that first year I was so absorbed with the miracles I was witnessing that nothing else seemed really to matter. Some one has said that the only truly interesting thing in the world is the thrill and mystery of awakening life, and it was from that that my joy came. Students were here who had come from cabin homes on plantations and in the timbered regions, whose only baggage had been a bundle or a cheap suitcase. Their ambition for many years had been to get an education, and although they had little idea what that meant in reality, so strained had their lives become to achieve it, that to get here meant almost rebirth into a new world. Back home was all but forgotten; they had a chance for an education at last.

One case I shall never forget. His name was Shelton James, and he was a great, strong fellow, having worked as a black-

smith before coming here. He must have been eighteen, at least, but he had started down in the fifth grade. One could more nearly see him in the proper setting as he ploughed with the school's oxen, getting the ground ready for spring crops, or hammering at the anvil, or even making a wheel for an ox-cart from one of the big pines—than in the schoolroom.

Nevertheless James had his softer side. At making paper flowers he could rival a French milliner. These he would attach to the trailing smilax from the woods and decorate the crude, whitewashed walls of our chapel in a way which was pleasing beyond description. That he sometimes insisted on putting his paper flowers in vases was quite another question in art, but he was easily convinced when Principal Jones told him that real flowers, not paper ones, should go in vases.

Books, however, were Shelton's Waterloo, even though he had come with no other desire than to learn their contents. He did so much want to "educate," but the flesh was weak. Trying to study just naturally put him to

sleep, and many a night his kerosene lamp would burn itself out before he woke up from his nap and went to bed. The next day the teachers would charitably give him the easy questions, and so he continued his school work and finally graduated. But those of us who knew him knew that he had gotten much that could not be put down on an examination paper.

To go back home and help his people by preaching had been James' ambition; to "teach the teachers," he sometimes expressed it. His spirit burned brightly. He lost no opportunity to speak before the students, and he carried them away with his eloquence. He took the corrections to his English in good spirit and tried not to make the same mistake the next time, all the while probably realizing better than we how little those things really matter. When he left us it was to go and preach in a rural church. Later he farmed.

Poor James! The product of a background and ambitions far beyond his ability to change or realize at the age when school became a possibility to him, yet possessing gifts which

SCHOOL GIRLS PREPARING CORN FOR CANNING.

the rest of us might well envy. He is dead now, and as I think of him the words of Whittier always remind me that,

> *"In the hereafter angels may*
> *Roll the stone from their grave away."*

Others much more promising were with us that year. Lanie Brown was soon to graduate, and when she did she went far down into the woods and began teaching a school which was rural indeed. Not only the parents used snuff, but the children who came to her were addicted to it. The trustees refused to replace the broken panes in the windows, for where, they inquired, would they spit? And the parents voiced their objections when she tried to break the students of the habit.

Lanie's task was a great one in that first school. When I visited her I wondered if, after all our efforts in Piney Woods, we had given her the help which would enable her to change the circumstances which she had learned here did not make for education. Often since then, while in the North, I have attended meetings for discussion of educa-

tional problems and I have wondered what these same speakers would have done had they been confronted with the ones which Lanie Brown had to face. Her pedagogical errors may have been colossal, but so were her difficulties and her opportunities. Lanie is dead now, but some of the children she taught first are our finest graduates. Her wages for teaching were eighteen dollars a month.

Other students here at Piney Woods were so bright that they really had no place in the classes. Three from one family were among these—Tressie, Essie, and Frank Blalock. Their mother had long been a teacher, and they had entered the first grade in due time and were finishing at an early age. They were here because the dormitories offered a safe place of residence during their high school years. Their mother could and did pay their way.

Of the teachers and workers that first year I cannot speak highly enough. Either I had never known such fine folks anywhere else or I had never needed to see their better side as I needed it here. Besides Mr. and Mrs. Jones there was Mother Jones, mother of the

principal. Her threescore and ten years must have been nearly expended then and her health was poor, but she assumed the responsibility of boarding the teachers. Her home was so small that they had to eat in relays. Some of us were from the North, and our stomachs rebelled at the food. She, too, was from the North and knew what we wanted, but it was beyond her power to get it for us. She did, however, make light bread sometimes, and she would deny herself the eggs from her own hens in order to put them into our food. The work was hard for her, for the student girls she had as helpers were not used to her ways, and her insistence upon absolute cleanliness and speed was beyond their ken. Not long after she gave up the task of that winter she went to her heavenly home, but certainly it was with the sense of having done her share of the world's work.

I have told of the loyal teachers who would watch the clock around from 7 A.M. until 9 P.M. in the classroom, but I have not said that in addition to this they found time to give music lessons, to train quartets who began to have ambition to travel for the school, and

to prepare programs which would be instructive as well as entertaining. For we had little else to entertain us that year; it was for the most part all work and no play, and Jack came out either duller or with a wonderful vision of the possibilities of human nature as exhibited under hard circumstances.

II

MY TEXT-BOOKS

NEW buildings were the greatest need of Piney Woods School when I arrived. A student body far too large for the quarters had gathered here, so great was the desire for education among their people. Temporary buildings to accommodate about seventy had been erected and more than two hundred had crowded in. So, leaving the guidance of the institution as much as possible to others, and even leaving the care of their own small children to one who loved them, Mr. and Mrs. Jones concentrated all their efforts on raising funds and erecting new buildings. They succeeded with amazing rapidity. The early months of 1921 saw a fine brick dormitory for girls put into condition so that at Commencement time the girls moved into it.

When spring came, Mr. and Mrs. Jones took a quartet of singers and went North to

raise funds. That summer the main building of the school, known as Goodwill Hall, was erected. The next year the boys' dormitory, and a residence for the principal's family, which also provides quarters for the entertainment of the school's guests, were built. It was a record indeed—four large buildings in less than three years' time! But that is getting ahead of my story.

The two most remarkable people I have ever met in my life were Mr. and Mrs. Laurence C. Jones. Taken separately, they were almost superhuman; together, they were a host. Mrs. Jones' education and earlier occupations had fitted her for just the work she was doing. After graduating from high school at Burlington, Iowa, she had opened a school for her own race there. Quickly sensing her superiority as a teacher, people of the white race had asked to enter their children in her school. She had run the little institution until public school changes made it unnecessary. After that she had studied public speaking in the Chicago Conservatory of Music. She then began to raise funds for a college for her race in Kentucky. With

this background of experience she could face any problem which her life at Piney Woods presented.

Nor was any test of Mrs. Jones' spirit too great. Well I remember asking her, as she prepared to spend an entire summer in the North to raise funds, if she felt she should leave her two little boys here for six months without her. "Well," she replied, "I do not feel I should let my two boys stand in the way of these two or three hundred who need what I can do for them." It was a challenge to her love, for she said it with tears in her eyes, but she quietly went on with her program.

Mr. Jones impressed me in those days as a man so far-sighted that the present was out of the picture. Had not Mrs. Jones and others attended to the present needs, I fear at times even he would have actually suffered. In very early days he had the wisdom to locate the temporary buildings of the school at the foot of the campus hill, leaving the clear top for the permanent ones; the food of today was all but overlooked in his planning for the location of pastures and poultry

yards and fields of tomorrow. I came to realize that it was necessarily so—his brain must vision the future if his institution were not to be a serious jumble. To that far-sightedness belongs the credit of hiring a landscape architect who mapped out the location for future buildings and roads which now, seventeen years later, are not yet all realities. To that same far-sightedness belongs the compliment which has come from so many: "How splendidly your grounds are laid out and your buildings placed!"

Six months of the year, with only an occasional trip down here, both Mr. and Mrs. Jones would be away from the school. During their absence the work of the institution would go on without a break. It was marvelous to me, and more so when I began to know the persons who carried the burden in their absence. For while they were as fine folks as I ever met anywhere, they had hardly even a fair preparation educationally. Mr. or Mrs. Jones would have to write letters in the North and send them down here to be copied and sent out, insisting that every comma and dash be as they made it, for other-

wise the letters would go out incorrect in some way.

The little monthly paper, *The Pine Torch,* was gotten up in the same laborious fashion. In those days some of the older student girls did the printing, since all the boys were needed for work in the fields. Many a proof would have to travel back and forth before it was in shape for the final impression. Small wonder that it generally arrived from the press so late that they would have to work almost all night to get it into the mails in time. When you realize that ten thousand or more copies went out monthly you glimpse the enormity of the task. In those days there was no electricity to make the work easier, so that not only the folding of letters and the canceling of stamps but much of the addressing had to be done by hand.

The responsibility for the classroom work was carried by less burdened shoulders, but Mrs. Jones, for the love of teaching, had the bulk of the English classes whenever she was at the school, until the year before she died.

To show the accomplishments from this

end is, however, only a part of the picture. Two young people—practically unknown in the world, and members of a race whose integrity is often smiled at in both legend and practice—had started out to build a school. They had no money of their own. The school was far away where few to whom they went for funds could see it. Was it too much to expect that folks would have confidence in them and their story? Yet the funds they must have!

Tact and wisdom beyond the capacity of ordinary people must have characterized their every move in those earliest days, for in some way the confidence came. Mrs. Merritt Greene, of Marshalltown, Iowa, once told me of her experience in that line. They had come to her because they knew she had a fine home. Would she like a colored girl to work for her board and attend high school, they asked. She invited them in and began to inquire more regarding them. Laurence Jones had graduated from high school in Marshalltown, so she knew his record and she realized his unselfishness in trying to give others of his race the advantages he enjoyed. She

made up her mind then and there, not only to take the girl but also to ask them to make her house their home while in Marshalltown at any time. Since she was a social leader, this gave prestige as well as comfortable quarters. Late in her life Mrs. Greene told me she felt that one of the finest things she had ever done was to open her home to them.

I know more of the value of this to Mr. and Mrs. Jones than even did Mrs. Greene, for stories have often come to me of the quarters they would have to accept while out soliciting funds. The mayor of Nevada, Iowa, once said to me that the most sorry night he ever put in was after Mrs. Jones had called on him and he had inquired where she was staying while in their town. She told him the only place she had found was with a colored man and woman who were of such character that they made no pretense of being man and wife. The mayor was a Southerner by heritage, so had hesitated to ask her to stay at his home, but he resolved next morning, and told her so, that from then on his house was open to her whenever she came to Nevada. Later he insisted that not only Mr.

or Mrs. Jones, but their whole group of singers, crowd in when they came to town.

An interesting sidelight to the story of the girl coming to work for Mr. and Mrs. Merritt Greene is worth recording. Having traveled in the South many times and having seen the homes of Negroes, Mrs. Greene knew not to expect too much when her girl arrived from Piney Woods. She was, however, not quite prepared, on the first day of Mary Lou's arrival, to find her so entirely unaccustomed to ordinary things. Mrs. Greene had instructed her to go to the cellarway and bring the dust-pan. When the girl did not return at once she realized her bewilderment —Mary Lou had never seen a cellarway and had never seen a dust-pan.

The personalities of Mr. and Mrs. Jones have been a steady source of wonder to me. Rebuffs because of their color have been constantly changed into opportunities for exhibiting good spirit and also a chance to tell of Piney Woods School. "Make the passing shadow serve thy will," is a timely exhortation, and these two people have surely capitalized their color to the good of all concerned.

"He is the truest gentleman who ever entered my presence," said Mr. George S. Barner, of Webster City, Iowa, to me of Mr. Jones. "Are you Mrs. Jones?" would be a frequent inquiry when I told of my mission when out soliciting. The inquiry would be quickly corrected, but I never failed to get pleasure from it. Mr. and Mrs. Jones have so subjugated their color to their marvelous personalities that they have made people forget all but their fine characters.

More real Christianity was also revealed to me through knowing Mr. and Mrs. Jones than I had chanced to see among other people. Mr. Jones once told me of being seated at a table in a diner. While waiting for his meal he had a paper up before his face, reading. When the waiter brought his food and he lowered the paper the man who was seated opposite abruptly left the table. "How did you feel?" I asked. "Oh," he said, "I was only sorry for him; after all, I was better than he was, for I would not have treated him that way."

No effort was ever too great for either Mr. or Mrs. Jones if it would help their school or

their race. Once for eighteen months Mrs. Jones was away on a tour with the Cotton Blossom Singers. In addition to the nightly concerts she called on the friends of the school, and the record of the funds she raised that year reads like an impossibility. Even going from store to store and accepting a quarter here and a dollar there did not worry her—a task from which others would have shrunk.

To drive all night or to go without food for twelve hours seems simply a part of the day's work to Mr. Jones. He makes friends with the high and with the lowly. Interviewing William Gibbs McAdoo or William Wrigley, Jr., or receiving a contract as lecturer on a Chautauqua circuit, are no different to him than seeing Dan Young, the old colored man at Toledo, Iowa, who spent his last days at the county farm because he had no one to care for him, but whose finances were in such a condition that he left Piney Woods five thousand dollars in his will.

Never have I seen either Mr. or Mrs. Jones embarrassed in any situation. Their mission is a worthwhile one, and they fully sense that

they are doing it all for the sake of others. Consequently they carry themselves with the unconscious dignity of great purpose. They have always given, just as they have received. In the years I have known them, I have yet to hear of one being turned from their door because of the meagerness of funds, of the remoteness of their claim, or of the accident of birth.

The Negro blind children of Mississippi can thank Mr. Jones for all but three years of their education. When the State felt it could not continue to appropriate money for their school expenses, he kept them on anyway, and today there are twenty-three enrolled in the blind department.

Cripples and maladjusted boys and girls, even from other States, have in many instances been allowed to come to Piney Woods and, losing their sense of difference among those of their own race here, have continued their education and gone out to be splendid men and women—all because Mr. Jones disregarded warnings and took them in.

Helping likely graduates to go on to college, early became one of the policies of Mr.

Jones. More than twenty of whom I know personally have taken advantage of it. In these cases they repay the money out of later earnings, but at the time they could not have gone on to school but for his aid.

The personal stimulation given to those around them by Mr. and Mrs. Jones is to me a constant source of amazement. Never have I seen it equaled. I can recount cases where one who has hardly a fifth grade mind has gone out and managed groups of singers in so creditable a way that their audiences praised them constantly. Even their English, for the time being, seems without fault. If any of my readers doubt this, I would like to tell you the personal history of some of those speakers from Piney Woods to whom you have doubtless listened. I have seen those whom the school refused to graduate, because of their inability to get their lessons, go out and make dates for groups in Northern states, meeting the emergencies of the road, planning tours efficiently, and speaking in public, without any one guessing they were not one of the school's teachers.

My early associates in Piney Woods have

become some of my best friends. There was Miss Eva Spell, acting treasurer, who also served as general manager in the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Jones. Her mixture of white, Negro, and Indian blood made an individual whose poise I immediately envied; she could command and be instantly obeyed, for her very presence made it so.

"Mother" Penney, wife of the chaplain and matron of the boys, but mother to all who needed her wise counsel, became a safety valve as well as a source of information for things I did not understand. Her heritage was that of the illegitimate child of an illegitimate child—all products of the white race, so her fair skin and long white hair made her conspicuous around Piney Woods School. Her kindly spirit was the result of many burdens borne for others and a knowledge of the best and worst in human beings. We all leaned on her. No wiser person ever crossed my path. How I envied her her ability to understand and sympathize with every one, and yet her sternness where wrong was concerned!

Charles M. Shedd is another associate of those early days from whom I have learned

much. His good nature in the face of every difficulty, big or little, and his generosity even to points which affect life's happiness itself, make me feel small and ineffectual.

In the years since, many have entered my life, but never have come ones who made a deeper impression than did those faithful few who stood so loyally by Mr. and Mrs. Jones, giving the best they had, in those early days of Piney Woods School. Some way our little group always reminded me of the words of the hymn:

"I yield my flickering torch to Thee
That in Thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be."

III

SOME LESSONS LEARNED

WHAT of the Negro in America? This question has often been asked me by visitors who have come to Piney Woods, as well as by many on whom I have called in the interest of the school. We all realize the situation is of proportions so great as to create a problem.

Ten million Negroes are here in the midst of one hundred million white people. What they have learned, for the greater part, they have learned from us. We are one in language, in religion, in ideals; together we stand or fall economically. To be simply Americans would be logical, and it could easily be that, except for the high wall of prejudice which the white man has built up.

From my own experience I am convinced that it is this prejudice, rather than any racial difference, which has created the problem for America. That many a Negro is better than

many a white man, no one will argue; therefore no serious inferiority of either race prevents our being one people. That the Negro has made advancement in the seventy years since slavery which would entitle him to a normal place among us no one doubts; that he has any characteristics which would make it impossible for him to be just one more American is far past argument.

In other words, it is simply the attitude of the white man toward the Negro which makes him different—not any intrinsic lack in the Negro. That this attitude exhibits itself sometimes in the shape of economic fear of him, sometimes in hatred of his physical presence, and sometimes in sport of some of his characteristics, is simply weakness on the part of the race which assumes itself to be superior.

Having no panacea for the problem created by the two races being here together in the United States except for both of them to become Christian, when I came to Piney Woods I turned to study what could be done to aid the situation. My thought was as much to learn what would help on both sides as it was

to carry any great alms to the Negro. To call my coming in any sense missionary would have been ridiculous. Who are we of the white race to go as missionaries to people to whom we preached the love of God and at the same time held them in slavery? What can we, of the white race, teach them who by practice daily, to almost every person they meet, "turn the other cheek"?

However, down here at the school I found things I could do. Mr. and Mrs. Jones were carrying far too heavy a load, and I was glad to be able to relieve them of some of the office work. In the years since, I have often had the privilege of going out on the road to solicit funds or with some of the Cotton Blossom Singers. I have met many of the finest people of my experience in this way, for those who are interested in this work of uplift are always among the best.

For recreation in my early years down here, I visited the old colored people in their homes, occasionally attending the rural churches. I found these old people intensely interesting, for their eyes had seen and could see much which mine could not. Their ac-

counts of their days of slavery bore no bitterness; rather a fondness for their masters was exhibited. I often heard accounts of cupidity, which certainly their masters never suspected and which apparently left them (the slaves) with no sense of inferiority; with them at least it seemed to be a matter of beating the white man at his own game rather than of any slave cringing before his master. And yet, over it all there always seemed written a wonderful tolerance for the frailty of man, white or colored, which left me with the memory of Kipling's lines: "He's a better man than you are, Gunga Din."

Their accounts of seeing ghosts interested me. They also convinced me that no men could be as good liars as were those old people—if they were lying. Soon I realized that they, of a different heritage than we, must be able to see and hear things which we of the white race, with all our getting, have lost. It is as though the story Mr. Jones told me of an early experience here were transferred to a different realm: One day he had ridden muleback over to Sylvarena, a settlement fifteen miles from the school, straight through

the timber. While there, a boy came who wanted to enter Piney Woods School, so he climbed up behind Mr. Jones on the mule and rode along. Four miles from the school the lad sniffed and said, "I smell the railroad." So accustomed were the boy's nostrils to the pure air of the woods that he could detect the smell of coal smoke as far away as that.

Just so with these older people; so clear are their senses that they can literally detect things which our grosser faculties can only dumbly label as superstition.

Another of my recreations has become a great joy to me. The fear of meeting some harm from being in the woods alone is nonsense; no one is more peaceable than the workmen and country people who walk the paths which lead past the school out into the different communities. Stories of snakes are harder to forget than the foolish warnings regarding bad men, but I early decided that if snakes did not bite the barefooted children who walk six and seven miles to school, they probably would not hurt me, so common sense has also allayed that fear. Now I tramp the country, in rainy season and dry. The still-

ness of the great woods at nightfall has become a tangible thing; the peace of them has become the peace of God to me.

In ways like these I have been able, by getting out of myself, to meet the problems of life in what was to me an unnatural environment, and so to keep nerves from becoming distraught.

IV

SOURCES OF SUPPLY

BEFORE I came to Piney Woods they had decided on the name "Cotton Blossom Singers" for the groups of students who went out to give concerts and raise funds for the institution. The humor of the name, to any who have seen the real pink and white blossoms, makes its appeal. However, Cotton Blossoming was to become serious business in the life of the school.

It was the first group of singers which went out which was the direct cause of my coming South. While spending a summer in Des Moines, Iowa, I attended a Chautauqua. As entertainers there came daily Laurence C. Jones and his band of Cotton Blossoms. Many quartets from the school have done better singing, and many worse, but it was not their music, nor even the talks of Mr. Jones, which attracted me. It was the faces of the singers. I knew something of rural

conditions in the South, and I decided if Mr. and Mrs. Jones were so influencing their students that that tolerant, thoughtful look should be on their faces, they were worthy of help. After the first program I met Mr. Jones, offered my services, and that fall came down to the school.

The Cotton Blossom Singers have come to be one of the school's main sources of income. Since many more students come penniless than can be profitably given work, the idea of sending them out as singers, instead of keeping them here to overcrowd the farm or laundry, is a wise policy. House cars, built in the school's shops, provide cooking and sleeping facilities, so gas and provisions become almost the only items of expense, and even much of the food is donated. These groups cover many of the Northern States during the summer. Graduate groups sometimes spend their winters traveling in California or the South. Concerts are given each night, besides all possible appearances at conventions, service clubs, missionary meetings and Sunday Schools. Few indeed are the gatherings where a collection will not be taken after the Cot-

ton Blossom Singers have sung some of the old spirituals and told of their school. These trips are of great educational value to the students. As many as twelve groups are sometimes out.

The passing of Mrs. Jones in 1928 was a blow which nearly floored the institution, as viewed by human eyes. The whole make-up of the school had to be reorganized, for she had carried the responsibility for certain departments, aside from doing her own large part of the whole. Mr. Jones felt the load to be very heavy, for he was used to sharing it with another. In addition, their two boys, Turner Harris, fourteen, and Laurence C., Jr., eleven years old, were left motherless. Nevertheless, a Wisdom higher than ours was in charge, and in the years since workers have developed who share not only the work she left, but the responsibility. Under the cedar tree where Piney Woods School was started, Mrs. Jones was laid to rest—a rest well earned.

V

ANOTHER GRADE

ANY attempt to bring these reminiscences and impressions up to date seems folly, since time goes on and so does Piney Woods. The years, however, have brought some changes in the well-being of the institution which I want to record.

All the early whitewashed buildings have long since been replaced by modern brick ones. That none of them is large enough is only a tribute to the growth and worthwhileness of the school; what mother would not want her child to outgrow its clothes?

A water system adequate for a city of two thousand has been installed. This not only assures plenty of pure water for domestic purposes for many years to come, but also gives abundant water pressure in case of fire.

In the classrooms modern school chairs have replaced the rough wooden benches of the earlier days. These have arms for writ-

ing, so the students do not have to get down on their knees and use the seat for a desk, as they did when I came. (I mistook the class for a prayer meeting the first time I entered a room where they were taking an examination.)

Many other improvements have come, but Piney Woods is still far from being a finished product. Both dormitories and classrooms are overcrowded, and never has there been a time when it seemed possible to lay aside the farm work long enough to haul good dirt so that the hilltop campus might be covered with a lawn. In other places this might be a small task, but here heroic effort is necessary to fill in and sod this gravel-bed. Every foot of it becomes a rushing rivulet during our semi-tropical rainstorms. It is a healthy spot because of this excellent drainage, but it is far from beautiful. But to have students in school is worth more than beauty, claims Mr. Jones, and so the students are here and the campus is unsodded, though as this is being written the boys are going at the task.

Good-blooded hogs have replaced razor-backs and they and the extra stock from the

dairy make possible the meat which was so woefully lacking in our diet of the earlier days. A splendid flock of chickens now make eggs something more than an Easter treat.

The school still grinds its own corn and makes its own syrup, but now the corn bread is made of something more than cornmeal, salt, and water. There is a large bakery, too, so that light bread is a staple. The syrup is still syrup, but there are other things to eat for sweetening. Milk and butter have now a large part in our diet, and the gardens have been extended to furnish something besides greens in the way of vegetables.

The policies still remain the same, and I am glad of it, even though the bookkeeping department sometimes shows a deficit, and boys and girls are packed closely in the dormitories; all are still allowed to come who prove they are in genuine earnest. Working for one year with only the privilege of attending night classes is an excellent test—unless they are determined to get their schooling, they will not endure it.

Big boys and girls, men and women in size, still come and start down in the grades with

CHAPEL, OFFICES AND SCHOOL ROOMS, 1937, COMMUNITY HOUSE IN THE FOREGROUND.

the little folks. I hope they never cease to come so long as there is the need. They are worth a hundred who go through school in the listless fashion of many who are sunk in a system and have to make no real effort.

Educational standards at Piney Woods have been greatly raised, but I am hoping they never get so high that the awkward one whose primitive background has made him slow in books cannot find his place here. I wish this even at graduation time when he goes out, though his mastery of algebra, and perhaps spelling, is somewhat slippery.

As I write these words I am conscious that I am only one of a host of others who are happy in these improvements which have come to Piney Woods School, just as I was only one of the host who longed for them, for us, when we did not have them. Behind me with their wishes are hundreds who gave the funds to make the improvements possible.

Each year there come gifts in amounts from twenty-five cents to a thousand dollars —always for the same purpose. People send because they want these boys and girls who come to Piney Woods to have better advan-

tages than they are having, and they want still others to have the privilege. Some of these givers deny themselves to send the donations, while others feel it is their duty to help. Still another group leaves legacies. The spirit of these joins with ours who are here in actual service, and together we build an institution which will long serve Negro boys and girls.

All this, however, is only one side of the picture. The other is what Piney Woods School is doing and has done for white people. That is a service which few have stopped to realize. The singers, going from place to place as emissaries of the school, have also been ministers of good will. With their songs they have pleased and educated the white race. With their forbearing spirit they have taught many a lesson in good manners. They have drawn the two races together.

Experience has taught me that however much one may hate a class, they seldom entertain the same hate when they come to know one member of the class personally. Workers from the school have done that for many people; they go to them in the interest of Piney Woods and for the first time many

such a one becomes intimately acquainted with a Negro. Never again can the thoughtless one condemn the entire Negro race.

My feeling in regard to the value of Piney Woods School as an avenue of good will, leading both ways, has so impressed me that at times I have declared if some one would give us a million dollar endowment, making further solicitation of funds unnecessary, I would personally consider refusing it. I feel Mr. and Mrs. Jones have shown more men and women the values which lie under a Negro skin than have many preachers in pulpits.

VI

WHAT ABOUT GRADUATION?

AFTER writing the final words of the last chapter, for the first time in years I have found opportunity to do some local visiting. The experiences of these weeks have answered the question which heads this chapter in a way which leaves me feeling entirely satisfied.

Like any normal person, I see many things to which I would like to devote my life. The fight against tuberculosis; Negro advancement in other countries; inter-racial work among churches (helping people to see how futile is a profession of Christianity when they are prejudiced against one of a darker color who worships under even the same denominational name as themselves)—these and other activities have so enlisted my sympathies that I would willingly give the rest of my life in helping to advance any one of them. But after these trips into the va-

rious parts of the county in which Piney Woods itself is located, I know this is still my task.

During my earlier years here I used to say to discouraged workers that whenever I became blue over things, all I had to do was to go away from the school a little way to get over it. There I would see boys and girls so unkempt and with such purposeless looks on their faces that I knew their futures would be nothing but undirected existences. I would then come back to Piney Woods with my faith in its effectiveness renewed and with redoubled purpose to do my part toward enlarging its capacity so that more of these young people might find their chance here.

My recent visits into the most rural sections of our region have done exactly this for me. Many, many colored people are living in homes with no glass windows. I do not mean the glass is broken out, but that the cabins were not built for glass windows in the first place. Mothers are sending their children to school with no lunch at all, or with only a cold potato. I inquired of a

white man, who was fixing a bridge, why there are so few good roads in that region, and he answered that there would be no use to make a good road because there is no family near who even owns a wagon; he said they ride muleback or walk. I asked him how they haul the crops, such as the cane and cotton. He pointed to a homemade sled contraption and said that they hitch their mule to that. The runners of the sled were made of six-inch logs. In another place I saw a cart affair with sections of pine logs used for wheels. Most of the farm implements are of the one mule variety.

In the Negro public schools education is struggling upward, but under great difficulties. In one place where I visited, two teachers were holding their classes out of doors on a very frosty morning because the school building, begun the spring before, had not yet been finished. The fault in this instance lay not with those who furnish the funds, but with careless trustees who did not realize the value of these days of school for their own children. So much the more need for education! In other places seventy or more children were

huddled together in small rooms, with no desks, no blackboards, poor lighting facilities, and almost no books. In a few of these schools there are homemade desks, but generally the builder neglected to use planed lumber.

I listened to badly prepared teachers trying to instruct children who were inadequately clothed, under-nourished, seated on benches where they had not even elbow room and where their feet did not touch the floor. I wonder how much education many of our professionals would have gotten under such conditions. I know that many of these adverse conditions must be changed from higher up, and we hope the day is quickly coming when they will be, yet I also realize that if the teacher and patrons had the knowledge, many of the schools could be greatly improved, even with their present faulty equipment.

So I realize that our task at Piney Woods is far from finished. We must train better teachers for this generation, and we must train better parents for the next generation. We must keep public sentiment with us in

our desire to help these country people. We must teach them to so carry on their farming that it will yield enough to furnish their share of the comforts and the necessities of life.

For truly these people work hard. Never have I dreamed of any one so willing to work if properly directed. To reshingle a house they will fell the tree, cut it into sections, and hew out each separate shingle by hand. Because they are too poor to buy brick, they will make wattles of long grass and mud and dry them, then lay them up for a chimney. So much labor and then, alas, it is not fireproof, and embers will get through and burn the house down! For brooms, they gather the wild sedge and tie it into bundles, using native grapevine or other creeper for the ties. In none of the seventeen schools, nor in any of the homes where I visited, did I see one "boughten" broom.

One has only to travel among these people to see the reason for the great love of social life which they exhibit when they get together. Shut off in these lonely clearings, with a half-mile or a mile through the woods to the nearest neighbor, with no road near,

or if there is one with a passerby so seldom as to be an event, they could not but welcome the opportunity to go to some little country store once a week, or to attend the monthly church service. Small wonder that they stay all day at that. Stouter hearts than theirs would rebel at so much loneliness.

At Piney Woods itself, our task is far from finished in regard to the buildings. Extra space is almost as much needed now as it was when I came seventeen falls ago. True, there is a dormitory for boys and one for girls, but within three weeks another of the same size for each could be filled with worthwhile young people who want to come if we could take them. Boys and girls often drop out of the country public schools by the time they have reached the fifth or sixth grade. They then seek entrance here.

If we are to train the girls to be better home-makers than their mothers, we must teach them to sew and to mend; to cook without so much grease, and to vary their diet; to care for children properly and to make their homes attractive. One of our graduates told me she had never heard of

mending stockings until she came to Piney Woods; that all they ever did at home, or all that the neighbors did so far as she knew, was to throw them away when they became too full of holes. She told of her mother cutting out her dresses with the butcher knife. That this teaching cannot be attempted by rural public schools, with children who must walk from two to six miles daily, is evident to all.

Industrial training for the boys is just as necessary. Piney Woods School, with its dormitory life and its program of work-your-way, is a fine answer to the problems we face. But the needs are great. We must have buildings in which to properly give this training. The laundry work for about three hundred people is being done by the school girls with no better equipment than tubs and washboards and old-fashioned flat irons. The girls do not rebel at this, for they know it is a part of their education, but there should be adequate space and drying rooms for use during the rainy seasons, when it is sometimes impossible to hang out clothes for a week at a time. Imagine trying to dry the

BOYS ERECTING THEIR OWN DORMITORY.

clothes for three hundred people around stoves!

The task of giving practical education here is a great one, for the reason that our students must go so far in order to catch up with things as they are in other places.

They must make the transition from getting water from springs or running streams to getting it from a hydrant. These are the first plastered buildings which most of our students have ever entered, and they have to learn by experience that plastering will break if a log of wood, or a husky boy, falls against it. Most of those who come have to be shown how to get water from a faucet and how to turn on an electric light. A telephone or a radio is a thing of mystery. They must here bridge the gap, not from kerosene lamps to electric lights, but from pine torches and fireplace lights to them. So much to learn, besides what comes from books!

Another of our obligations, we feel, is that of helping the white and Negro races to understand and to respect each other. We must never forget that such soul-searing acts as lynching and the burning of another's home

flourish where one spark of hate is allowed to catch the ever present tinder. We must advance, but seemingly with heads down. God help white America that this may be so!

Then, too, many of our students have had no contact with white people whatever before coming here, and they look upon them as human beings apart. One elderly man told me that, until I arrived, he did not know there was a white person anywhere who wished the Negro well. I began to tell him of the Patties and the people at the nearby lumber mill and of Mr. Mangum, the Braxton banker—in fact about all the white people around the school, who are so fine in any emergency and who have helped advance the cause of Piney Woods, as well as of white people in the North. He was new here then, but I am sure he has had abundant testimony in the years since that many white people wish the Negro well.

In these pages I have not stressed the need at Piney Woods for raising the funds to keep the school going. Most of our waking hours are given to meeting that necessity, for nine-tenths of the income must come from the out-

side; the students are able to pay only a small amount, if any.

Another of our obligations is toward our rural colored people. In spirit they are so fine that one feels humble before their love of God and their willingness to do for one another, as well as their industry and desire to advance in this world. Greater souls I have never met than these untutored fathers and mothers. But the school term for Negroes in some of these counties is only four months, and then they are not able to provide books and pencils so the children may get on with their lessons. They often insist on raising only corn and cotton, instead of planting food crops or changing to others for which a ready cash market is available. They will take their children out of school to knock down the cotton stalks with a stick, instead of hitching a mule to a plank and doing it in one-third of the time. These may seem small things, but they are very vital when one realizes that a race cannot advance unless every individual in it advances.

To meet this need, Piney Woods gives all possible aid to the Negro county agent, to

the home demonstration agent, and to the vocational agricultural agent, two of whom have headquarters here at Piney Woods. These well trained leaders work directly with the older people in their homes and on their farms. We send visitors to the rural schools and to the churches and try to reach them in that way. Each fall a fair is held here, and stress is brought to bear on the parents during the entire season to be ready to compete for prizes on garden and farm produce, on poultry, hogs and cattle, and for canning, quiltmaking and dressmaking. Many hundreds come to this fair, and we feel some enlightenment is reaching them through this channel.

There is still one more obligation. That is to those whom I personally represent—to those of you who are reading this book and to educated people everywhere. Many of you have not made yourselves familiar with the gifts which those of Negro origin are making to us. Some do not know their capabilities nor sense the magnificent advance they have made under very adverse conditions since being brought to America.

When I first came to Piney Woods I realized that Negroes are pure in heart compared to those of us of the white race. They have their shortcomings, to be sure, but theirs are only shortcomings. Ours are more. Bringing them from Africa for no better reason than to satisfy the greed of the white man can be called by no better name than sin. The dark days of slavery, deeds of which are too horrible for us to record for our children to read in the history books, did not remove the stain. So I say again, whatever their shortcomings, our acts toward them have been sin. With our constant urge to feel superior, if even with some reason, we still have that dark past for which to atone. When we are tempted to feel great, let those of us of the white race humbly remember that terrible scar on our national life and instead try to cover at least a little of our sin with charity.

Then again, we have much to learn from these splendid people and from their ways of working out their salvation as a group among us. Because they have not been irritatingly commercial, taking business away

from us, we have often neglected to take account of their value. They are making contributions far finer than piled-up dollars. Gifts which have their source in deeply emotional natures are among these. Music is one—not only the spirituals and jazz and the blues, but a creative ability which, when the fiercest days of struggle for very existence are past, will surely mature in interpretation of great themes. Few white people realize that Negro music is the only distinctive musical gift which America has so far made to the world; all other types have come to us from older nations. Negro music alone is wholly American in origin.

In poetry and art, although there is no place to record them here, those who are interested will learn that Negroes are doing great things. Richard B. Harrison astonished America in acting in "Green Pastures," as has Paul Robeson in Shakespearean drama. Yet most white people think of Negroes only in comedy acts. For that matter, those who saw them lend their testimony to the fact that Williams and Walker and a dozen others have excelled in that line. Roland Hayes is filling our na-

tion's largest halls with listeners to his tenor rendition of both classical and racial music.

Those who doubt the physical and athletic ability of colored people may well lay aside prejudice long enough to remember that Will Rogers wrote, on the occasion of the try-outs for the Olympic Games at Los Angeles, that he came home feeling if he had only blacked up a little he might have gone out and won something himself. As it was, Eddie Tolan, Metcalf, and Gordon demonstrated worth which cannot be gainsaid.

Booker T. Washington showed that practical common sense was not lacking in the Negro, even applying it to the classic process of getting an education. Laurence C. Jones, in turn, is so conducting Piney Woods School that his feet rapidly follow his dreams.

The finer qualities of humility, patience, loyalty, respect for spiritual things, and joy of living, are exemplified in colored people. It is as though the white race needed special teachers along these lines, so they were sent among us.

VII

MORE LESSONS LEARNED

DURING my seventeen years of association with Piney Woods School I have met many people who have asked, "Why do you do it? Is it worth while to spend your life in that way?"

In the first place I can only wish for my questioners, and for others to whose minds the same query might come, as well as for the friends of this institution whose gifts help to support it, some of the joy which has come to me from my contact with these superior ones of the Negro race.

In the next place, of course, I hope that some good is being accomplished by my being here. If desire is really creation I can be satisfied, for I sincerely want these young people who come to us at the school to have the chance in life which should be the heritage in America of every normal boy or girl. But the measurements of good and gain are among the mysteries which are hidden from us.

Personally, however, I can only speak in the most glowing terms of the benefits I have received through my efforts to help here. The chance for travel in the interest of the institution is not the least of these. Not only have I gone into every state in the Union but I have extensively toured more than a third of them. Booking engagements for our Cotton Blossom Singers not only takes me on the main roads, but some country church, off the paving, where the farmers wear clean shirts but do not feel like changing their work shoes, is sure to want to hear our boys some Thursday evening. So off I go to locate the minister and he in turn drives with me to talk matters over with the head deacon or chairman of the board of elders. There I also talk with the farmer's wife and learn how many little chickens she has, and how much milk the fresh cow gives, while I am arranging for a concert, by our boys, which will net Piney Woods from ten to thirty dollars. Contrast that with the days I solicitously manage arrangements for our singers before a Rotary Club with its two hundred and forty members, in a down-town hotel of Pittsburgh or San Francisco, or to sing for a

dinner party given by one of our donors where we are to entertain her friends in the Park Manor in San Diego. We tread softly, and pinch ourselves to be sure it is real, as we walk over the thick carpets of the lounge, where the boys are to sing for the guests, at the expense of the management, in some of the most elite hotels of Palm Beach or Pasadena. On several tours I have driven a car more than a hundred thousand miles, for while out dating I keep two, and sometimes three, groups busy.

Meeting personally the donors of Piney Woods School has been another privilege. That hearts of gold are not always covered with laces of gold I early discovered. Sometimes I go to some humble cottage to see one whose time for gathering in life is over but who gives out of her meager savings or a tiny pension. The amount in figures may be small but it must be golden indeed for I never leave such a person without remembering the lines that,

"Who gives himself with his gift feeds three,
Himself, his hungry neighbor, and Me."

A former Secretary of the Treasury, a Department of Agriculture head, a famous car-

toonist, society leaders, social workers, and most of all, sincere, wideawake, cultured ministers, are only a few of the hundreds of worthwhile individuals it has been my privilege to meet through my business for Piney Woods.

It has not always been people of means from whom I have profited by contact. Sometimes it is one who lives in a backwoods cabin, who has never sat at a school desk, but whose face shines with love for her Lord, and who proves it by sheltering from one to six children, who are not her own but who need her ministrations. Sometimes such souls live near the school but not always. Somewhere in the North there will be a problem child, whose earnest mother desires that we allow him or her to come to Piney Woods, so I am sent to investigate. One devoted mother lives in Iowa, whose attractive daughter would have had a very different sequel to an unpleasant childhood escapade, had not the school opened its doors to her. Even now, though the daughter has long since graduated and married, she can never do enough for our representatives; she will keep us in her home, give us meals, and thank us constantly. That, "Of such is

the kingdom of Heaven," must have meant the children in spirit as well as in stature, for it is a great joy to be entertained by such people.

Another aspect of compensation is seldom lacking. One evening a white neighbor, who owns and operates a lumber mill near the school, came to the office on a matter of business. In the course of his conversation he said, "It must be agreeable to work where you have such pleasant music all the time." He referred, not to a radio, but to groups of students who were practicing. I listened. "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," floated up from the chapel. Sounds from the girls' dormitory brought, "Listen to the Lambs All A-Crying," while from somewhere else came the strains of "Ole Man River," sung as it should be.

These folks are the heirs of a music which I feel is one of America's greatest contributions to culture. Rooted in the soil of the cotton fields and the cane-breaks, born, as is all true emotion, of suffering and joy and religion, untutored slaves and their descendants have given us a fund of material in the spirituals and plantation songs which can be characterized as both folk and classic. Often the boys

and girls who come to us here have musical genius which a Metropolitan star might well envy. Almost any evening some one will say, "Come on, boys, let's practice." "Where is a bass?" "Ask Knox if he will lead for us." "Pitch it a little lower, please,"—and then they are off. Everything else is forgotten. In the working out of new chords the harmony will be made to order, in case it is not a song they all know. An emotional interpretation exhibits itself in a form which requires no speech —a look or a grunt conveys what is wanted. They will work for an hour if need be, until the result is a beautifully blended arrangement which will please the best trained musician.

When the least promising lad around here, who may resent hair-combing or shoe-shining as an infringement on his personal rights, and whose clothing was salvaged by the matron here from some box or barrel of cast-offs sent from no one knows where, cannot refrain a smile when I begin to sing, I am perfectly willing to acknowledge that he is my peer. This accounts for my never even joining in the congregational singing; I do not care to have my inferiority so well advertised.

If any of you doubt that this musical ability is so marked at Piney Woods, come and visit us and with me attend a chapel service. Every one but mine of the four hundred voices in the room will be raised. As many as six parts will be carried on simultaneously, all without effort and in perfect harmony. As our neighbor says, it is indeed a pleasure to have firsthand contact with so much good music.

There is still another side of my experience at Piney Woods which I would like to record for the benefit of those of my readers who can never have the opportunity to know Negroes as I do. Someone once wrote an article on, "The Joys of Being a Negro," and, as I have said elsewhere in this book, I feel Laurence Jones could qualify as its author, so greatly does he minimize his handicaps. But minimizing is a terrible task.

I bring up these matters in the hope that it will call forth thought and self-examination on the part of every one of us, as to our attitude and treatment of people not wholly like ourselves—on the outside.

One of my first observations, after coming to Piney Woods, was that folks here do not

feel nearly so badly about being Negroes, as white people seem to think they should. In other words, there is no constant monitor in a colored man's mind, which tells him at every waking moment that he is inferior. Such a thought is in your own brain, not in his. Do you go around with an inferiority complex constantly? If you do, to what do you amount? So why should he? A Negro is simply conscious of being a man, as are you, with no special mental grading of the scale, up or down. Why should it be otherwise? If a darker skinned individual is well read, intelligent, hard-working, seeing life whole, except for the white man's treatment of him, why should he be constantly dogged with a burden which would weight his spirit and make him know that his accomplishments or his purposes are not at par with another of the same accomplishments and purposes? He is not. That burden of inferiority is the beam in your own eye which you try to place in his.

The fact remains, though, that you do place the burden there, and its consequences are mighty. "You must not sit in the next seat at a concert or in the theatre beside me," is one

put on him by only a few. "You must not eat in any restaurant where I eat," is contributed by many more. "Negroes must not ride in our part of the street or railway conveyance," comes from a still larger group. "You must not worship Almighty God in my church," in America is almost universal.

Therefore the man or woman with a dark skin, no matter what his educational, cultural or financial accomplishments, along with "the least of these," of his race, must climb to the balcony of most theatres (if he is allowed to enter at all), or be denied some of the things which will satisfy that side of his nature, just as they satisfy yours and mine.

A Negro man or woman must go down to the poorest section of a town and eat in a restaurant which caters, both in appointments and in cooking, to those of the race, who by circumstances most patronize it—the laboring man who has no chance to change his clothes or wash before eating. Since finding such a restaurant in many small towns, especially in the North, is generally impossible, a colored person who travels must often eat sandwiches which he can buy and take out, for days at a

time. They are sometimes told they cannot even buy a plate lunch and take it out and eat it, because, "we do not want you eating off our dishes."

Travel is avoided by Negroes as much as possible because the use of public toilets is so often forbidden them; this aside from other inconveniences.

Put yourself in a colored person's place and realize the burden you help to place on him. Then realize it is all for no fault of his own. He cannot possibly escape being black for no one so far has discovered a satisfactory way to bleach the pigment out of dark skins. It helps sometimes too to try to figure out what credit belongs to you, that you were not born as they were.

I bring up these subjects for no other reason than to try to help white people realize the weight of ignominy we constantly put upon Negroes. They face the danger of constant rebuffs because of their race; and which are apt to come from the most lovely of your children calling out, "nigger," as from yourself who registers disgust when you see one of them in the lobby of your hotel. Add to that

the imminence of lynching, and discrimination every time a job is applied for, and you will see that indeed a Negro is not inferior, if he can succeed at all under such a weight of imposed hindrances.

In closing, I want to say this of my life at Piney Woods. To some it may seem that because my time is being spent in an unusual manner, as contrasted with the more regular, commercial pursuits, these lessons learned are peculiar to me. I do not feel so. My experiences here are merely the index to life itself. Piney Woods and its people, and existence from their side, simply happen to be the textbooks from which I should study.

NEEDS FOR FOLKS AT PINEY WOODS

AND FOR OTHERS WHOM WE WILL HELP

A car for use of the community nurse.
Clothing for folks, aged four to sixty, both sexes, any size or oversize.
Dictionaries and books for school libraries.
Desks for teachers; can be made in Piney Woods School shop for six dollars each.
Towels and bed linen for resident students who are too poor to furnish their own.
Sewing machines, either new or used.
Shoes—especially large sizes.
Material to teach sewing.
Fruit jars and other canning equipment.
Cast-off knives, forks, and spoons.
Toys—can be re-conditioned in the school's shops.
Busy work for little people.
Legacies for Piney Woods' endowment fund.
Annuities.
Domestic arts building; cost $10,000.
Repairs and equipment at community house—$1,500.
Carpentry tools.
Cards and pictures for distribution among rural schools and homes.
Magazine subscriptions.

Printed in the United States of America

By Laurence C. Jones

PINEY WOODS AND ITS STORY

Cloth $1.25

DR. HENRY T. MOORE, *President-elect of Skidmore College,* says:

"Last night I started reading 'Piney Woods', and found it fascinating. The unusual charm and idealism of the author surely add to one's faith in the Negro race."

THE SPIRIT OF PINEY WOODS

Cloth $1.00

BOSTON TRANSCRIPT:

"A great educational project. Mr. Jones is doing his work with rare ability and concentration. The book is full of human interest and the spirit of service.

THE BOTTOM RAIL

Cloth $1.00

BUFFALO COURIER EXPRESS:

"It is refreshing to come across a book like this. It is a note of optimism in a wailing world."